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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE'S SUBMISSION FOR THE 2006 TIP REPORT:
PART III

REF: A. SINGAPORE 631

- [1](#)B. SINGAPORE 630
- [1](#)C. STATE 3836
- [1](#)D. SINGAPORE 470
- [1](#)E. SINGAPORE 139
- [1](#)F. 05 SINGAPORE 3614

[1](#)1. (U) This is the third of three messages relaying Embassy Singapore's 2006 TIP submission. Part III covers Protection and Assistance to Victims, and details the sources Post has consulted in preparing this submission.

PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

[1](#)2. (SBU) A. Does the government assist victims, for example, by providing temporary to permanent residency status, relief from deportation, shelter and access to legal, medical and psychological services? If so, please explain. Does the country have victim care and victim health care facilities? If so, can post provide the number of victims placed in these care facilities?

Singapore provides foreign victims of serious crimes an immigration status that allows them to stay until the need for their testimony is over. It has provided such status to trafficking victims and to foreign domestic workers who are victims of domestic abuse. This status does not automatically grant the victim the right to seek employment, but the Ministry of Manpower has not rejected applications for work permits by victims of trafficking or abuse. Finding employment can be difficult, however, as there are few jobs in Singapore for unskilled workers with limited English skills, and domestic workers may have difficulty taking sufficient time off to participate in police investigations. Singapore does not offer permanent residency status to persons based on their status as a victim.

The Singapore authorities (usually in consultation with the victim's embassy) refer victims of trafficking or maid abuse to shelters for women and children such as the Toa Payoh Girls Home or the Good Shepherd Center. The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) refers clients to at least six different such centers. In some cases, abused foreign domestics live in shelters run by their embassies. Both the Indonesian and Philippine Embassies run shelters for their abused domestics. In a 2002 case, the 12-year old Malaysian girl referred to above stayed at the Toa Payoh Girls Home, while preparations were made to return

her to her parents, where she received counseling and other services tailored to her needs. MCYS has arranged counseling and health care for victims of both trafficking and maid abuse. A government-run clinic offers free screening for HIV/AIDs and other sexually transmitted diseases on an anonymous basis. Post does not know how many victims received assistance from MCYS, but the Ministry says it offers services to any victims it determines need them. NGO contacts who work with the Police, Immigration officials, and MCYS to find shelter and other assistance for trafficking victims or other women who need protection, such as women who are trying to stop working as prostitutes, are pleased with the support and cooperation they receive from the authorities. One consular official described Immigration officials in particular as "very good at helping people," and noted that they handled all requests for assistance professionally and expeditiously.

1B. Does the government provide funding or other forms of support to foreign or domestic NGOs for services to victims? Please explain.

Due to the limited number of victims, the government does not provide dedicated funding to assist trafficking victims. However, the government does provide financial assistance to shelters for women and children, and does support a clinic that provides health services and counseling to victims. (Note: The GOS provided approximately SGD 250,000 in 2004. Post will report 2005 amount when it is available. End note.)

Source country consular officials say that Singapore police and social workers have been helpful in providing victims access to any medical care needed, from serious surgical procedures to new eyeglasses, often free or at heavily subsidized rates.

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1C. Is there a screening and referral process in place, when appropriate, to transfer victims detained, arrested or placed in protective custody by law enforcement authorities to NGOs that provide short- or long-term care?

Law enforcement authorities have good cooperative relationships with NGOs, the Ministry for Community Development, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Manpower and foreign diplomatic representatives. According to NGOs and consular officials, when a victim is identified, the Police consult with that person's embassy as well as the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports to determine what assistance the victim requires, and which facilities are able to provide it.

1D. Are the rights of victims respected, or are victims also treated as criminals? Are victims detained, jailed, or deported? If detained or jailed, for how long? Are victims fined? Are victims prosecuted for violations of other laws, such as those governing immigration or prostitution?

The rights of victims are fully respected. Embassy is not aware of any case where a trafficking victim was jailed or prosecuted. The question of whether trafficking victims are treated properly by authorities was raised for debate in Parliament in October 2004, and the government's responding assurance that victims are treated respectfully was widely publicized. Foreign prostitutes rounded up by the authorities are not prosecuted for prostitution offenses. In a small number of cases (less than five percent of prostitutes detained), over-stayers are charged with being out of immigration status for remaining in Singapore beyond the validity of their visa or permitted duration of their visit, or for returning to Singapore during a two-year ban that the GOS imposes on women who have been caught working as prostitutes. Sentences for such offenses are generally between one and four months in jail.

1E. Does the government encourage victims to assist in the

investigation and prosecution of trafficking? May victims file civil suits or seek legal action against the traffickers? Does anyone impede the victims' access to such legal redress? If a victim is a material witness in a court case against the former employer, is the victim permitted to obtain other employment or to leave the country? Is there a victim restitution program?

The government does encourage victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking and maid abuse cases. Victims may file civil suits, but, although at least one NGO encourages women to pursue this course, none are known to have done so, probably because a court case would require them to remain in Singapore for several months. No one impedes victims' access to legal redress. Victims are permitted to leave Singapore, and some are known to have done so in maid abuse cases; however, authorities are severely handicapped should they present a legal case without a witness, and police generally urge victims to remain, pending legal resolution of a case. In some cases, Singapore prosecutors have flown witnesses back to Singapore as required to prosecute a case. Prosecutors express frustration that witnesses who leave Singapore often drop out of contact or decline to return. Singapore does not have a special victim restitution program, except through normal civil procedure.

1F. What kind of protection is the government able to provide for victims and witnesses? Does it provide these protections in practice? What type of shelter or services does the government provide? Does it provide shelter or any other benefits to victims for housing or other resources in order to aid the victims in rebuilding their lives? Where are child victims placed (e.g. in shelters, foster-care type systems or juvenile justice detention centers)?

Authorities protect victims and witnesses from intimidation by defendants; in many cases, the accused are held in custody pending trial. The locations of certain shelters in Singapore are generally kept a secret, and NGOs that run shelters tell us that police routinely patrol their areas and will intensify their surveillance if there is a reason to believe that someone is in danger. Child victims are housed in shelters specifically meant for children (both government and privately run); the Singapore government is currently

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undertaking a process by which it will license all shelters and facilities that cater to children. The secure Toa Payoh Girls Home has been used to house victims who may face retribution by traffickers, as in the case of the 12-year old Malaysian girl referred to above.

1G. Does the government provide any specialized training for government officials in recognizing trafficking and in the provision of assistance to trafficked victims, including the special needs of trafficked children? Does the government provide training on protections and assistance to its embassies and consulates in foreign countries that are destination or transit countries? Does it urge those embassies and consulates to develop ongoing relationships with NGOs that serve trafficked victims?

Singapore police officers are competent and well trained to recognize and assist victims of such crimes. In February 2004, Singapore, Malaysian and Indonesian police participated in a regional anti-trafficking law enforcement seminar. The Singapore Police have also consulted with a local NGO on interview techniques and how to better interact with victims.

There are good counseling services available to victims of sexual assault and physical abuse, and the authorities work closely with NGOs and other organizations with training and experience. Singapore is not a country of origin for victims, making the last two questions not applicable. The Ministry of Manpower does train new foreign domestic workers on basic safety precautions and their rights under the law,

and informs them of the resources, including the maid hotline, available to them. The Ministry also provides all maids with a handbook containing this information in their native language.

¶H. Does the government provide assistance, such as medical aid, shelter, or financial help, to its repatriated nationals who are victims of trafficking?

Not applicable; no Singaporeans are known to have been trafficked.

¶I. Which international organizations or NGOs, if any, work with trafficking victims? What types of services do they provide? What sort of cooperation do they receive from local authorities? Note: If post reports that a government is incapable of assisting and protecting TIP victims, the post should explain thoroughly. Funding, personnel, and training constraints should be noted, if applicable. Conversely, a lack of political will to address the problem should be noted as well.

In 2004, Singapore registered the &One Hope Center⁸ as a society; it is the first organization in Singapore dedicated to helping women escape prostitution. The organization's founder has worked with foreign workers, recovering drug addicts, and former convicts for seven years and received the President's Social Services Award in 2003. The One Hope Center works closely with the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA), and the police to provide for the women's welfare. It employs trained counselors who help women leave prostitution, helps them get into shelters, and liaises with the police and immigration authorities as well as foreign embassies to facilitate their return home (usually putting them in contact with another welfare NGO in their destination country). The One Hope Center is currently planning to start a &One-Stop⁸ center in one of Singapore's red-light districts by end-2006. It would serve as a shelter and provide counseling, skills training, and legal advice. MCYS is partially funding the project. The One Hope Center is also involved, with other local NGOs, in efforts to lobby the government to change its definition of trafficking to reflect the definition in the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

Other NGOs assist foreign workers who have problems with employers (from failure to pay wages to physical or sexual abuse). While such problems rarely would amount to trafficking, the work of the NGOs helps provide confidence that labor trafficking victims would be discovered and assisted. A civil society group known as Transient Workers Count Too (formerly &The Working Committee 28) aims to boost protection for foreign workers, particularly maids, and detect abuse cases earlier. The Humanitarian Organization

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for Migration Economics (HOME) provides shelter to foreign workers (including maids) who are in disputes with their employers or who have been abused, advocates on their behalf, and educates them on their rights and Singapore laws protecting them. HOME also occasionally takes in sex-trafficking victims referred by the police who are waiting to appear as witnesses for the prosecution of their pimps or traffickers. The Hand-In-Hand Association, another group dedicated to providing humanitarian assistance to foreign workers in Singapore, will begin its operations in March 2006. Some privately run shelters are also available for foreign victims of sex-trafficking or maid abuse, and a government-assisted clinic provides sex-related health services and counseling.

Cooperation from authorities is excellent, according to NGO contacts, and authorities actively refer victims to these services. Singapore's strict laws on abetting immigration offenses require shelters to decline services to persons out

of immigration status; however, trafficking or other crime victims can obtain temporary immigration status pending a trial. Some NGO contacts also report that they have been able to work out arrangements with the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority where women trying to escape prostitution but whose visas have expired are allowed to return to their home country and are not charged with immigration offenses if they turn themselves in to the authorities. Other NGOs and some embassy officials note that ICA will let people leave the country without serving time for the immigration offenses if there are extenuating circumstances.

SOURCES

13. (SBU/NF) A. Diplomatic Representatives: Embassy maintains contact with consular, labor and other officials of embassies that represent the major source countries for foreign laborers and sex workers. Note: Foreign domestic workers come almost exclusively from Indonesia, the Philippines, or Sri Lanka.

-- Bangladesh

Mokammel Hossain, First Secretary, Labor Attache

-- India

Sanjiv Kumar, First Secretary (consular)

-- Indonesia

Fachry Sulaiman, Second Secretary (consular and protocol)

-- Philippines

Crescente Relacion, First Secretary (consular)

Merriam Cuasay, Labor Attache

-- Sri Lanka

M R Gunaratna, Minister-Counselor

-- Thailand

Kesanee Palanu Wongse (Political Counselor)

Phirintra Sucharitakul (Second Secretary, Consular)

-- Vietnam

Nguyen Dinh Nhi, First Secretary (Consular)

1B. NGOs, Civil Society, and International Organizations. Embassies also met routinely with NGO representatives that deal with foreign worker and trafficking-related issues.

-- Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2, formerly The Working Committee 2) is a civil society group formed in 2002 and registered as a society in 2004 to lobby for improved working

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conditions for Singapore's roughly 150,000 foreign domestic workers (FDWs).

Braema Mathi, Chairperson

Constance Singham, Member

-- Commission for Migrants and Itinerant People (CMI) runs a shelter to assist TIP victims and other foreign laborers

(including FDWs) in need. CMI provides frequent assistance to foreign workers with labor disputes, e.g., over back wages, interceding with employers and/or the Ministry of Manpower.

-- The Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics runs two shelters in Singapore for foreign workers and exploited or vulnerable women. It is also engaged in some public outreach work aimed at raising awareness of domestic workers vulnerability to exploitation.

Bridget Lew, Chairperson

-- Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) is not focused on trafficking as an organization, but it does work on issues related to the exploitation of women and some of its individual members and participating organizations deal with TIP issues.

Braema Mathi, founder

Tisa Ng, President

Sara Dean, Chairperson, Sub-committee on Safety

-- Action For Aids (AFA), an NGO devoted to advocacy and patient care, has been given a grant through the Department of STD Control to interact with streetwalkers. AFA volunteers build relationships with street-based prostitutes, distribute materials about condoms and sexually transmitted diseases in a variety of languages, and distribute condoms.

Benedict Jacob-Thambiah, former Executive Director

Paul Toh, Executive Director

Brenton Wong, Vice President

-- One Hope Center, an NGO devoted to assisting women who wish to escape prostitution, provides shelter, counseling, liaises with law enforcement and helps women return to their country of origin. It plans to open its own shelter and service center this year with the assistance of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.

Reverend Dr. Edward Job, President

-- UNIFEM works primarily with victims and NGOs in Batam, Indonesia, a destination for Singaporeans traveling independently for sex tourism. It is also involved in public outreach programs in Singapore calling attention to the plight of victims, particularly children, of sex tourism.

Saleemah Ismail, Anti-Trafficking Coordinator

Melissa Kwee, President

-- The Good Shepherd Center is one of the shelters to which the Ministry for Community Development, Youth, and Sports (MCYS) refers victims in need of assistance.

Sister Agnes, Director

1C. Researchers and Observers. Singapore's "authorized" brothel industry is well-researched by the government officials, academics and observers with whom we met; the same persons also study the other parts of the industry (streetwalkers, lounge hostesses, etc.), although with less comprehensive information.

Dr. Wong Mee Lian (protect) is a professor in the Department of Occupational Health and Family Medicine at the National University of Singapore. Since the early 1990s, she has instructed Singapore's sex workers on negotiating condom use and other safe sex practices. She has conducted scholarly studies based on hundreds of interviews with both sex workers

and clients, to whom she has good access. Dr. Wong manages a database in which all registered sex workers dating back to 1990 are listed with pertinent identifying information such as age.

Dr. Roy Chan (protect) is the Director of Singapore's Department of STD Control and (in his off time) head of the NGO Action for AIDS. His clinic conducts the medical exams and tests on brothel employees. Action for AIDS promotes safe sex among the workers both in the tolerated and freelance brothels.

Dr. Ganapathy Narayanan (protect) is a professor of sociology at the National University of Singapore specializing in deviance and social control. He is very familiar with the history of prostitution in Singapore and how the trade is regulated in other countries.

Sharon Wee is a former student of Dr. Wong who wrote her Masters thesis on the clients of sex workers. She participated in numerous programs with Dr. Wong and worked directly with both sex workers and their clients in the course of her research.

Dr. Pattana Kitiarsa is a Thai postdoctoral fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore whose research focuses on Thai migrant workers in Singapore, including Thai prostitutes.

Daniel Tung (protect) is a researcher and project coordinator at the Department of STD Control, who has worked the past three years on a project monitoring trends among streetwalkers in Singapore and encouraging women to use condoms and get regular health checks.

Salma Khalik (protect) is a health correspondent at the Straits Times who was involved in writing a recent series of articles that highlighted the rising rates of AIDs and other sexually transmitted diseases and the link to both prostitution and sex tourism.

1D. Government Officials. The Embassy interacts with several government agencies on trafficking-related issues.

-- The Ministry of Home Affairs includes all Singapore's law enforcement agencies, including the police and immigration officials. The MHA provided details of anti-vice operations, information on the detained sex workers, and other statistics relevant to anti-vice operations. The Ministry also has information on specific cases, including charges against vice abettors and pimps.

Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Home Affairs

Tony Soh, Director, Policy and Operations

Cecilia Chew, Senior Assistant Director, Policy and Operations Division

-- The Ministry of Manpower handles all issues relevant to foreign workers in Singapore, including maid abuse cases, wage claims, and complaints about working conditions. The Foreign Manpower Management Division was established in August 2003, concentrating and expanding the staff dealing with foreign worker issues; one mandate is to consider and implement new policy initiatives aimed at safeguarding foreign workers.

Ng Cher Pong, Director, Foreign Manpower Management Division (Policy)

Kenneth Yap, Head, International Relations Unit

-- The Attorney General's Chambers provides information on specific prosecutions, i.e. the statutes under which traffickers and vice abettors are charged. They can also

address the state of inter-agency deliberations on international agreements Singapore is considering signing. The AGC also provide centralized legal support for Singapore's government, from drafting of new laws to negotiation and adherence to international agreements.

Jaswant Singh, Deputy Public Prosecutor and Directorate

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Leader, Trial Litigation 1B Directorate

Marcus Song, State Counsel, International Affairs Division

-- The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports handles all aspects of victims, assistance. The Ministry places victims either in Government-run facilities, in shelters run by foreign embassies, or in shelters run by NGOs and church groups.

Ang Bee Lian, Director, Rehabilitation and Protection Division

Corinne Koh, Deputy Director, Family and Child Protection and Welfare Branch

Marie Yeo, Assistant Director, Programmes Development Section, Family and Child Protection and Welfare Branch

Grace Cheong, Senior Policy Officer, Policy and Development Branch

-- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not itself possess information needed to compile the TIP report, but we channel requests for such information through Directorate II. MFA also is involved in Singapore's participation in international meetings and relevant international agreements.

Simon Wong, Director, Policy, Planning and Analysis, Directorate II

Leow Siu Lin, Deputy Director, North America, Policy, Planning and Analysis, Directorate II

Ms. Vanessa Chan, Assistant Director, Specialized Agencies and Multilateral Issues Section, International Organization Directorate

Mr. Jonathan Han, Country Officer, North America, Policy, Planning and Analysis, Directorate II

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